JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

HONORING ALL PEOPLE

A Self-Examination for the Church

> Jesus broke down the dividing wall of hostility. Undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance and immovable expression build it back up, so before we talk about the world, we deal with the log in our own eye and learn to human well with the humans around us.

MAIN TEXT
Ephesians 2:11-16

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SERIES
We're Honoring to All People, Week 1 of 5

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. Full transparency up front: he states his own political position so nobody is blindsided, because clear is kind, and says the goal of the series is not to make people think the way he thinks but to make them think at all.
2. Before the church talks about the people outside it, it has to deal with the log in its own eye, and this message is aimed at the church rather than the culture.
3. The log is three things: undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance, and immovable expression. These keep churches and church people from expanding the kingdom.
4. Ephesians 2:11-16: Christ broke down the dividing wall of hostility, and these three things rebuild it. The job in the kingdom is not to build walls but to remove obstacles.
5. Undiagnosed pride is the sense that you have the truest handle on a situation and other people are wrong, usually about situations you have no experience in.
6. Willful ignorance is the unwillingness to listen to another human being explain why they see things differently, and it keeps you in the dark and builds the wall.
7. Immovable expression is the inability to keep your mouth shut, arguing online in ways you would never argue in a checkout line, and sharing things you know are false.
8. You are not your own, so "it's my Facebook" does not hold. Some of this is not about sin or not sin, it is about whether the gospel takes root.
9. The church has largely only learned how to take stands, so when it cannot take a big one it takes little stands everywhere, and all people ever encounter from Christians is a stand.
10. The alternative is learning to human well: hold the truth of God's Word in one hand and the love of the cross in the other, so people cannot square the position with the kindness.
11. God did redemption this way. The Word became flesh, God the Son humaned with the humans, and that is the model for how the church engages people unlike itself.



WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/9YfG_vNmUzM



READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/honoring-all-people

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This message opens a series on the last of the church's eight core ministry values: **we're honoring of all people.** The weeks that follow touch the political third rail, so this first message does two jobs. It sets the tone for the whole series (clear is kind), and it turns the examination on the church before the series ever turns to the culture.

Two cautions. First, this is a message to church people, not about outsiders. Keep the finger pointed inward. Second, be clear without being harsh. The goal is not to make anyone think the way you think. The goal is to get them to think.

Expect some quiet in the room. Name it, smile, and keep going.

Introduction

Turn to Ephesians 2. We will get there shortly.

Today we start a new series, **For All People.** The value behind it: we're honoring of all people. Have the congregation look at the person next to them and say, "You're safe. You'll be honored here."

Illustration: "Is that a gay flag?" The series graphic uses a band of colors, and someone asked whether it was a gay flag. Put the series background next to a Pride flag and let the room see they look nothing alike. Then: "Everybody calm down." Use the laugh to lower the temperature, then get serious.

The next several weeks will have moments that are dreadfully uncomfortable. Ask the congregation to bear with you and be gracious.

The goal is twofold:

- First, to preach the Word of God.
- Second, to state clearly where this church stands on certain issues, so that when God sends a harvest, no one who joins us is blindsided six months in.

Author and researcher Brené Brown says that **clear is kind.** The aim is not to be ugly or rude to anyone. It is to be clear, because clear is kind.

FULL TRANSPARENCY

For the sake of transparency, own where you land on the political spectrum, because this series will raise those questions. Pastor Jason said it this way: "I generally embrace a conservative philosophy of government. Every president I've ever voted for was at the top of the Republican ticket. I voted for Donald Trump three times. I don't own a red hat." If you are politically liberal, it is fair for you to know that. Why? Clear is kind.

Most of this series will not be political in nature, but most of what it covers you will hear about on every news channel.

There is an old line, first written about newspapers in the early 1900s and later applied to preaching, that the Word should **comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.** If you are hurting, find comfort today. If you think you have it all figured out, expect the Word to get under your skin.

Over the next few weeks, the liberals in the room will think the preacher is a blazing conservative, and the conservatives will have moments where they think he sounds like a liberal. That is because anybody who uses their brain does not sound exactly like either side. If you agree with everything one side's politicians say, you are not thinking. You ought to disagree with all of them on something.

So be gracious. Open your heart, open your mind, open your ears, and let the Word of God do a work in us. **My goal is not to get you to think the way I think. My goal is to get you to think.**

The Log in Our Own Eye

Jesus said to take the log out of your own eye before you take the speck out of your brother's: "first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5). Today we go after the log. The good news is that it is easy to aim at, because it is so large.

Much of this series deals with people who would probably not come through our doors, or who think differently from those who attend an evangelical church every week. It is good form, before we talk about *those* people, to talk about *these* people. Before the church demands that the world change, it has to come to terms with some things inside the church.

This is not mainly a message about sin. If it were, all it would take is a quick list: divorce, pornography, withholding the tithe, deceit, gossip, coveting, boasting, foolishness, greed, selfishness, disobedience to your parents and insolence. Did I leave anyone out? Everyone has heard that list preached before and is still doing it. Today is about **the kingdom.**

THE KINGDOM MATTERS

> **LUKE 4:43** ESV
>
> 43 but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."

The purpose of Jesus was greater than His preaching ministry, but Jesus Himself named preaching the kingdom as the reason He was sent. The kingdom is what He put His attention on.

> **HEBREWS 12:28** ESV
>
> 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

We have received the kingdom, we are receiving the kingdom, and we will receive the kingdom. The kingdom has come, is here, and is coming, and it is advancing in the earth today.

Romans 11 describes people who are unlike us being grafted into the family of God (Romans 11:17-24). One of our kingdom mandates is to bring in people who are not like us.

THE LOG

Here is the log in the eye of the church, at least of evangelical churches like ours:

Undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance and immovable expression.

These three things keep churches and church people from expanding the kingdom.

The Dividing Wall

> **EPHESIANS 2:11-16** ESV
>
> [11] Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—[12] remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. [14] For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility [15] by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, [16] and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Paul describes two people groups, "the uncircumcision" and "the circumcision." They had names for each other, and they probably called each other things they should not have.

But now, in Christ Jesus, those who were far off have been brought near. Jesus "has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14). One of the most important things a church does is honor that Jesus has broken down the dividing wall.

Undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance and immovable expression **rebuild the dividing wall.** They rebuild the hostility. This is why we cannot get along, why churches cannot grow, and why the gospel does not take root. It is why many people are certain that Jesus hates them: the church is how they have met Jesus.

"How can I rebuild something Jesus tore down?" Paul says it can be done: "For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor" (Galatians 2:18). We have to be careful.

Our job in the kingdom is not to build walls but to remove obstacles. That is not a comment on immigration policy. The concern here is the wall we build outside the church.

> **1 CORINTHIANS 9:22** ESV
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> [22] To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

In the New Living Translation, Paul says, "Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some" (NLT, 1 Corinthians 9:22). Pastor Jason read that as a teenager and it marked his life.

Hear this clearly: we do not let people vote on what the Bible says. The Bible says what it says. But that conviction is not a license to scream at a stranger in the grocery store over a T-shirt. At some point you have to say, "I'm in a moment where I've got to honor the person in front of me."

1. Undiagnosed Pride

You might not call it pride, which is why it is undiagnosed. It sounds like:

- "I've done enough."
- "You've got enough."
- "I know the answers, and you just make excuses."
- "I've solved the problem, and you just need to get with my program." Or, more often, "Watch this video from my favorite commentator and get with the program."

It is the feeling that **I have the truest handle on the situation, and other people are wrong.** That is pride.

"For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Galatians 6:3). *(Not on the screen.)*

We walk around thinking we have it all figured out in situations we have no experience in. For the person going through it, that situation is their whole life, and we think we have seven words that will fix it. "Just stop." If "just stop" worked, we would only need church once a year.

Illustration: Meemaw at the kitchen table. A few years after 2020, Pastor Jason sat at his late grandmother's kitchen table in Hueytown, Alabama. She said that all black people talk about is Black Lives Matter. He let her go on for a minute, then asked, "Meemaw, how many black people do you talk to?" "Well, not any, hardly." He told her he had quite a few black friends, and not one of them had ever said it to him. Could it be that the commentators on her favorite news channel kept harping on it, and it was not as big in the culture as she thought? That is undiagnosed pride: thinking I have a handle on something I actually know nothing about.

If you cannot hear "Black lives matter" without answering "All lives matter," at some point it is just argument. Yes, all lives matter, but there are times some lives need more attention than others. Unborn lives matter. Lives matter.

2. Willful Ignorance

Willful ignorance is one of the worst ways we reinforce undiagnosed pride. It is **the unwillingness to listen to another human being about why they see things differently than you.** It keeps you in the dark, and it builds the dividing wall of hostility.

Be clear: there is truth. There is absolute truth, and truth is truth. But some of what we disagree about is not about truth. It is about something that, if we understood it better, would make us empathetic, so that we walk with people in a way that helps them experience the kingdom through us.

Be careful who you listen to. Many of the voices people follow are opinion personalities, not data. They will tear someone down on air, then sit down with that same person and decide he is a good American after all. If they get to change their minds once they hear someone out, so do you.

Pick up the phone and ask questions. You do not have to be best friends. "Hey, let's talk. Help me understand this."

"It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out" (Proverbs 25:2).

"The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out" (Proverbs 20:5).

If you are never willing to learn about what anyone else is going through, you will constantly be rebuilding a wall of hostility. Most of us do not know what it is like to grow up in another country, and we may not fully know what a granddaughter or a neighbor is going through. Have the humility to admit you do not know everything about everybody.

3. Immovable Expression

Immovable expression is a fancy way to say **some of us struggle to keep our mouths shut.** Some of us share our opinions too much.

Illustration: the local Facebook groups. Join a local community Facebook group and watch strangers go after each other in the comments: liberal and conservative, old and young, different races. Would you do that in the checkout line at the grocery store? Would you turn around to the person behind you in a campaign hat and start yelling, right in front of the magazines? No. But that is what Facebook is. And nobody walks away from a comment thread thinking, "That was a really insightful counterpoint."

If you are going to share your opinion, at least stop sharing things that are obviously fake. If a post bashes the person you dislike or flatters the person you like, check it before you share it.

Illustration: "It's my Facebook." Pastor Jason once worked for a pastor who was posting things on Facebook that people in the church found offensive. His defense: "It's my Facebook." But you do not have a Facebook, because you are not your own.

> 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20 ESV
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> [19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

We do not own anything. We are stewards and managers of everything the Lord has given us.

A good question to ask: **Am I finding common ground, or rebuilding the dividing wall?**

"Well, it's not a sin to share my opinion." No, it is not. It is also not a sin for a preacher to fill his sermons with fart jokes, but he does not do it, because it is bad form and bad etiquette. Some of this is not about sin or not sin. It is about representing the love of Jesus in a way that lets the gospel take root.

Conclusion: Learn to Human Well

What should the household of faith do? **We have to learn to human well with other humans.**

Some of us can be a normal person around people who look, talk and think like us, but put us around people with different opinions and we cannot behave normally. Find common ground. Build common ground. Keep the wall of hostility down and the doors of the church open, so that people who do not look, sound or smell like us can come in and receive the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

This message is for the preacher too. There are people every one of us is uncomfortable around. But there is a kingdom mandate to step up to.

I'm not a conservative. I'm not a Republican. I'm not an Alabamian. I'm not an American. I'm a kingdom ambassador. All of those other things are true, but they are subset to the fact that I am blood-bought, born again and "called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). "We are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20). So are you.

STANDS AND THE DANCE

Pastor Travis Johnson of Pathway Church in Mobile recently drew attention for taking a very public stance against the Pride Month banners in downtown Mobile. Pastor Jason said plainly that he lands in the same place on that issue. There are times when leaders and public personalities have to take strong public stances.

Pastor Jason also suggested that the most effective way to see change in the culture is often quiet: go to the market. Pray, but change where you spend your money. You do not have to be ugly about it, and it does not require a word of argument.

God is doing something great in this church, and at some point the office of the pastor will have to be outspoken on some things. Those stances, even when necessary, can unintentionally rebuild the wall of hostility.

Here is the danger. It is caught more than it is taught, and church people have largely only been shown how to take stands. If you cannot take a big stand, you end up taking little stands everywhere: at McDonald's, at Walmart, and stand after stand on Facebook. Then every time people encounter the church, all they get is a stand. All they hear is bad.

You do not have to take a stand on everything all the time.

To stay on mission, we have to human with the humans, building common ground so that people outside the kingdom say, "I know where that church stands, but every time I deal with those people, they are kind, considerate and caring."

People should struggle to figure out why we would hold one position and still act with such kindness. That is the tension we hold: the truth of God's Word in one hand and the love of the cross in the other.

Illustration: "my friend." Pastor Jason admitted he struggles with they/them pronouns and does not use them. But "friend" is a word anyone can use: "It's good to see you, my friend." "Could you help me find this, my friend?" At a glasses store once, he was not sure how to address the person helping him. He did not

scream and he did not make his position known. He said, “My friend, can you help me find some glasses?” Looking back, he wished he had been even friendlier. We have opportunity after opportunity to human well.

GOD HUMANED WITH THE HUMANS

This is exactly how God approached redemption.

> **JOHN 1:14** ESV
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> [14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

> **1 TIMOTHY 3:16** ESV
>
> [16] Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

> **ROMANS 8:3** ESV
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> [3] For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

> **HEBREWS 4:15** ESV
>
> [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

God the Father held a holy and righteous standard that no person could meet. When it was time for redemption, He did it through God the Son taking on human flesh, becoming one of us, and bringing redemption through the cross. If God accomplished redemption by humaning with the humans, how much more should we hold to the standard of Scripture and still human well, so that we see the gospel take root in those who are far off?

If God loved me, it is fitting that I love people as well. And if we do, we might see people grafted into the kingdom.

Jesus taught us to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done” (Matthew 6:10). We want to see the kingdom come, because the Lord is “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Close in praise: if you receive the Word today, give the Lord a hand clap of praise.



ABOUT

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Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, an author, and the creator of POWER 27. He has given more than 20 years to the local church and helps pastors and ministry leaders lead BIG.

Free outlines, articles and leadership resources: **jasonmayfield.com**

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